

## Series: The Gift of the Holy Spirit

### Compassion

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During the days of Noah violence covered the earth. I believe that apart from the living God moving in compassion and moving in people to act compassionately, we would see little or none of it. Natural man cannot feel godly compassion. We might feel some level of pity or sympathetic concern but human emotions without God do not express true compassion. If there's a demonstration of concern, it's mostly coming from a "what's in it for me" bent of the heart, or it's a snare or trap or deceit or part of a con job.

Only in the nature of God do we have true compassion revealed. Compassion involves feeling passion with someone, to enter sympathetically into their sorrow and pain. Compassion in English translations represents at least five Hebrew and eight Greek terms.

We head for the dictionaries to do some research.

1. Our first word comes from a word translated "the inward parts." This can include the heart, lungs, liver, and kidneys, and gradually came to denote the seat of the affections. It can describe feeling compassion or moved with compassion and taking pity. G4697.

Matthew 9:46; Mathew 14:14; Matthew 20:34; Luke 7:13; Luke 10:33; Luke 15:20

In Hebrew the word *rachum* (rakh-oom') 7349 is used only and always of God.

#### Brown-Driver-Briggs

[Deuteronomy 4:31](#), [Exodus 34:6](#) (J) = [Psalm 86:15](#); [Psalm 103:8](#); later [2Chronicles 30:9](#); [Nehemiah 9:17,31](#); [Joel 2:13](#); [Jonah 4:2](#); [Psalm 111:4](#); [Psalm 112:4](#); [Psalm 145:8](#); [Psalm 78:38](#).

David H. Englehart comments:

"The Hebrew (*hamal* [\[חַמַּל\]](#)), *rachuw* [\[רַחוּם\]](#)) and Greek (*splanchnisomai* [\[σπλαγγνίζομαι\]](#)) words sometimes translated as "compassion" also bear a broader meaning such as "to show pity, " "to love, " and "to show mercy." Other near synonyms for compassion in English are "to be loved by, " "to show concern for, " "to be tenderhearted, " and "to act kindly."

*The Old Testament.* God's compassion is freely ( [Exod 33:19](#) ; [Rom 9:15](#) ) and tenderly given, like a mother's ( [Isa 49:15](#) ) or father's ( [Ho 11:8](#) ) compassion for a child. Yahweh boldly declares, "I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" ( [Exod 33:19](#) ). While his compassion can be thwarted by disobedience ( [Deut 13:17](#) ; [30:3](#) ; [2 Chron 30:9](#) ), there are times when his disobedient people's only hope is that his compassion overcomes his anger ( [Ho 11:8](#) ). Yahweh's compassion is rooted in his covenant relationship with his people ( [2 Ki 13:23](#) ). Hope for the future ( [Isa 49:13](#) ; [Jer 12:15](#) ) is also rooted in God's compassion. It is said that compassion follows

wrath ( [Jer 12:15](#) ; [Lam 3:32](#) ), is new each morning ( [La 3:22-23](#) ), and overcomes sin ( [Psalm 51:1](#) ; [Micah 7:19](#) ) rather than ignoring it.

Since compassionate acts flow from compassionate persons, we are not surprised to learn that compassion is constitutive of God's very being ( [Exod 34:6](#) , "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God" ). Echoes of this declaration are found throughout Scripture. God's compassion was essential for the maintenance of the covenant and his people praised him for it continually ( [Psalm 78:38](#) ; [86:15](#) ; [103:13](#) ; [145:8](#) ).

The New Testament continues to speak about God as the compassionate one. God's compassion is demonstrated in his Son's ministry for and among his people ( [Matt 9:36](#) ; [Mark 6:34](#) ). The messianic compassion is extended to the helpless crowds ( [Matt 9:36](#) ), the sickly masses ( [Matt 14:14](#) ), the hungry people ( [Mr 8:2](#) ), and the blind men ( [Matt 20:34](#) ). The waiting father ( [Luke 15:20](#) ) is filled with compassion when he sees his wayward son returning just as God has compassion on us and accepts us when we repent and return to him.

Believers learn about compassion through example and exhortation. Imitating God and/or Christ has led many to lives of exemplary compassion. The Scriptures also exhort believers to make compassion an integral aspect of their lives ( [Zech 7:9](#) ; [Col 3:12](#) ). Compassion needs to be nurtured and practiced or even this basic love response can grow dull and cold.”

David H. Engelhart

[Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#). Edited by Walter A. Elwell  
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The New Testament builds on the Old Testament understanding of God's compassion. Two central New Testament words are the one for mercy and the other is used for inward parts. Mercy speaks of the emotion aroused by another person's undeserved suffering or pain. Jesus commanded the Pharisees to learn God's desire for compassion ( [Matthew 9:13](#) ; [Matthew 12:7](#) ). Jesus said even slaves should practice compassion as He taught Peter about forgiveness ( [Matthew 18:33](#) ). God showed compassion in healing the demoniac ( [Mark 5:19](#) ). Christians need to show compassion to those who waver or doubt ( [Jude 1:22](#) ). God's commands for compassion from disciples finds its roots in the nature of God, who is full of compassion ( [Ephesians 2:4](#) ; [1 Peter 1:3](#) ). [www.biblehub.com](http://www.biblehub.com) . See mercy.

1. The word for “inward parts” deals with the location of personal feelings and emotions. Before Christ's appearance the Greeks apparently did not use this word to speak of compassion and mercy, it being more closely related to courage. It is not clear when the shift in meaning to compassion occurred. In the parable of the unforgiving servant, the master had compassion and forgave the servant's debt ( [Matthew 18:27](#) ). The prodigal son's father had compassion on him ( [Luke 15:20](#) ). The Good Samaritan had compassion for the injured traveler ( [Luke 10:33](#) ). Jesus had compassion on the crowds ( [Mark 6:34](#) ). People needing help asked Jesus for compassion ( [Mark 9:22](#) ; compare [Matthew 9:36](#) ; [Matthew 20:34](#) ). Paul saw compassion as a quality expected of believers ( [Philippians 2:1](#) ; [Colossians 3:12](#) ). Paul said he related to his readers in the compassion of Christ ( [Philippians 1:8](#) ), that is, the quality is not an achievement by the believer but a result of being in Christ. The love of God dwells only in those who are compassionate to a

person in need ([1 John 3:17](#); compare [Ephesians 4:32](#); [1 Peter 3:8](#) ). Compassion finds its source in God's compassion ([James 5:11](#) ). In compassion He has provided salvation and forgiveness ([Luke 1:78](#) ).

2. Another Greek word, *Oiktiro* is related to lamentation and grief for the dead and came to mean sympathetic participation in grief. Such sympathy or compassion stands ready to help the one who has suffered loss. In the Greek Old Testament translation *oiktiro* translates words related to *chen* and *racham* . Paul taught that God is the Father and source of compassion ([2 Corinthians 1:3](#); compare [James 5:11](#) ). He has total freedom in exercising compassion ([Romans 9:15](#) ). Humans can sacrifice themselves for God's causes only because God has sacrificed Himself in mercy ([Romans 12:1](#); compare [Luke 6:36](#); [Philippians 2:1](#); [Colossians 3:12](#) ).

3. Sympathy, *Sumpatheo* means to suffer what someone else suffers. It came to mean to suffer with, alongside, to sympathize. Peter listed it among the basic Christian virtues ( [1 Peter 3:8](#) ). Having come to earth and endured all kinds of human temptations, Jesus exercises sympathy for our weaknesses ([Hebrews 4:15](#) ). The writer of Hebrews could recall his readers' experience of having sympathy for and thus helping others imprisoned for their faith ([Hebrews 10:33-34](#) ).

4. Ability to moderate. *Metriopatheo* refers to the ability to be moderate in emotions or passions. A human minister realizes personal weaknesses and thus moderates personal anger at another's weaknesses ([Hebrews 5:2](#) ).  
<http://www.studylight.org/dictionaries/hbd/view.cgi?n=1369>

Enter the Holy Spirit. God's compassion is revealed in human hearts through a work of the Holy Spirit. For example, in Romans 12:15 He gives the godly ability to weep with those who weep. Compassion compounds love and sorrow. When the Holy Spirit is in this mood, our hearts are tender and easily moved by distress, sufferings, wants, and infirmities of others. Jesus wept over Jerusalem because the Jews missed the day of their visitation (Luke 19:41-44). Jesus had compassion on their ignorance and hardness of heart that kept them in darkness. But He didn't stop with the emotion; He not only desired to alleviate it, He had come to save.

5. Some components of compassion. Ephesians 4:32 provides us with some of the components of compassion: kindness, tenderheartedness, a willingness to forgive. The Holy Spirit will move in the believer to feel burdens that Christ feels when He looks on a sinful world. Thus the moving of the Holy Spirit takes compassion beyond a feeling to action. We will feel the burden and be moved by the Holy Spirit to an action of love. We will find ourselves being warm and understanding, not ignoring pain; being mindful and thoughtful, thinking not just of ourselves but others (Phil. 2); being humble while entering into the feeling of another's infirmity; being touched as Jesus is touched by the feeling of our infirmities.

**1 John 3:16-18 - <sup>16</sup>By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren. <sup>17</sup>But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?**

**<sup>18</sup>My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.**  
NKJV

1 John 3:16-18. So, the basis of compassion for others lies in the fact that Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. Therefore, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Specifically, John gets right in there with verse 17: Whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? If in fact the love of God, the God kind of love dwells in someone, he/she will not just write or talk about how much he loves God, but actions will show it. He/she will love in deed and in truth.

Now to this point, we must ask ourselves, "What constitutes truly the loving thing to do?" My husband, Pastor Jim, came up with this guide when we were being bombarded by people who essentially wanted us to adopt them: "We cannot adopt you. We cannot meet all of the needs on your list. We can meet some of your needs. These are the needs we choose to meet." To this I would add: This is how we choose to meet those needs.

Active listening, prayer, and choosing a specific need you are led by the Holy Spirit to meet are part of showing compassion. So are being openhanded and securing justice for the poor and upholding the cause of the needy (Deut. 15:11; Psalm 140:12). But getting in between another and God so as to create a co-dependent relationship is not. We need to set boundaries for showing compassion and also enjoin the Body of Christ while considering individuals and what truly does no harm. 1 Corinthians 1:3, 4; Colossians 3:12. Emotion might fuel our decisions, but the wisdom of God's Word should rule our decisions.

We are to come to the place of operating in the will of the Father with the mind of Christ and the heart or emotions of the Holy Spirit. That will be our reality one day when the Covenant of Grace in Christ's blood is consummated. In the estate of glory, we will no longer be in the presence of sin. Amen.

Colossians 3:12, 13:

**Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. Colossians 3:12, 13 NKJV**

Bibliography:

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